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ABSTRACT

A study reexamined the role of the classroom teacher in mediating the educational needs and goals of the changing population and explored the role of teacher education programs in providing contexts for the preparation of culturally "relevant teachers." Subjects were 64 mainstream and bilingual/ESL teachers enrolled in 2 multicultural education graduate-level courses at a major state university. Data included analysis of audio and videotapes, interviews, dialogue journals, autobiographies, and other written materials. One characteristic common to both courses involved having a minority instructor working with predominantly majority teachers who in turn were working with minority students in public schools. Preliminary results indicated four important dimensions that characterize the lives and teaching of culturally relevant teachers: (1) the power of life experiences; (2) awareness of their own cultural identity; (3) teachers as learners; and (4) commitment and responsibility for minority students. Findings suggest that the teachers taking such multicultural education courses reflect common attitudes held by the larger society and that many are confrontational and reluctant to take risks. Teacher educators need to acknowledge teachers' and prospective teachers' belief systems, cultural ideologies, and experiences to create a context in which traditional assumptions can be challenged and alternative views explored. (Syllabi for a research in multicultural education course and a multicultural education in a global society course are attached.) (RS)

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MIRRORS OF DIFFERENCE:
CRITICAL PERSPECTIVES OF BILINGUAL/ESL AND MAINSTREAM TEACHERS ON PEDAGOGY, LANGUAGE, AND CULTURE

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PURPOSE

The present study involves a systematic analysis of teachers' discourse about their perceived degree of involvement with and commitment for their ethnic and language minority students. The intention here is to gain a better understanding of the beliefs or ideologies about teaching and learning held by teachers working with minority students (regardless of whether they were professionally prepared in those areas or not) and the role they see themselves playing in that process.

More specifically this study attempts to: (1) reexamine the role of the classroom teacher in mediating the educational needs and goals of our changing population, and (2) explore the role of teacher education programs in providing contexts for the preparation of culturally "relevant teachers."

Data for this study were collected during two multicultural education courses for certified teachers. One characteristic common to both courses involved having a minority instructor working with predominantly majority teachers who in turn were working with minority students in public schools.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVE

> *Poetry [autobiography] is not a luxury. It is a vital necessity of our existence. It forms the quality of the light within which we predicate our hopes and dreams toward survival and change, first made into language, then into idea, then into more tangible action. It is the way we help give name to the nameless so it can be thought. (Lorde , 1984 p. 37)*

From a critical and feminist reflective methodology (Ellsworth, 1989; Grumet, 1988; hooks, 1989; Lather, 1986; Lorde, 1984; Maher, 1987; Miller, 1983), we examine and reflect upon these two multicultural inservice courses to learn about the teachers participating in the courses, the content of courses, the instructors' role, and the result of the interaction among the three.

In other words, we are interested in exploring the contextualized interrelationship among teacher, students and the specific conditions that contribute to teaching and learning. We acknowledge that what takes place in the classroom is partially determined by beliefs and assumptions about the

nature of teaching and learning, language, culture and ethnicity. These beliefs and assumptions about minority students have important consequences for opportunities that are provided for learning, for what is learned, for the kind of knowledge that is valued, for how knowledge is used, and for how students view themselves.

The consequences of different views about the nature of these issues become increasingly salient when we consider the massive numbers of students from diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds whose future will depend, in part, on the kinds of teachers they encounter.

Culturally Relevant Teaching

The term "culturally relevant teaching" (Ladson Billings, 1992) operates along a continuum of teaching behaviors and beliefs best described in contrast to an "assimilationist" teaching. One important difference between both approaches is that the function of assimilationist teaching is to transmit dominant culture beliefs, values, myths and ideologies and to induct students into the role that society has determined for them with an unquestioning, uncritical view of the way schools miseducate all children, minority and non-minority, females and males, middle-class and working class, disabled and non-disabled.

By contrast, culturally relevant teaching serves to empower students to the point where they will be able to examine critically educational content and process and ask what its role is in creating a truly democratic and multicultural society. It uses students' culture to help them create meaning and understand the world. Thus, not only academic success, but social and cultural success are also emphasized by the culturally relevant teacher.

METHOD

Major questions guiding the study:

- How teachers' conceptions of pedagogy, language, culture, and ethnicity are reflected in their intentions for action and interaction with their minority students?
- How can teacher educators provide a context in which teachers and student teachers can explore, refine, and redefine the attitudes, behaviors,

perceptions, and beliefs of a lifetime in order to better address the needs of minority students?

Data for this paper are taken from an ongoing study of teachers' perspectives on pedagogy, language, and culture. Data collected includes: analysis of audio and videotapes, interviews, dialogue journals, autobiographies, and other written materials.

By comparing and contrasting teachers' perspectives on pedagogy, language, and culture in a type-case analysis fashion (Erickson, 1981), we intend to locate the linkages between teachers' assumptions and beliefs, the content and processes of the two graduate courses, and the changes in thought and action that might emerge among all participants.

A total of 64 mainstream and bilingual/ESL teachers were enrolled in two multicultural education graduate-level courses at a major state university. While 49 teachers were enrolled in the Spring course taught by a female African American faculty member, 15 teachers were enrolled in the Summer course taught by a female Latino faculty member.

CATEGORIES OF ANALYSIS

Pedagogy and Teaching Practices

This category focuses on the perspectives, values, and talents held by participant teachers which guide the decision-making and activities of teaching/learning interactions in schools. This category focuses on both procedural (skill) knowledge of teaching in multicultural and multilingual settings, as well as more conditional or cultural (attitudinal) knowledge which teachers employed in everyday school life.

Course Content

This category focuses on the structure, pedagogy, assignments, and experiences in which the participant teachers engaged in the two multicultural/bilingual teacher education courses used in this study. More specifically, we used this category to examine the ways in which the activities of these courses mediated and influenced the perspectives and teaching practices of the participant teachers.

Work with Ethnic/Language/Racial "Minority" Students

Because we are interested in the ways in which participant teachers interact with and serve as advocates for ethnically and linguistically diverse students, we are interested in the ways that teachers describe their thoughts and actions ***in relation to*** the "minority" students in their classrooms and schools.

Direct Action and Implementation

In this category, the analysis focuses on explicit implementation of teaching, learning, and advocacy actions by the participant teachers. More specifically, the analysis is an attempt to look at the ways in which the multicultural teacher education course content for both courses and/or other activities influence the explicit thoughts and actions of the participant teachers relative to multicultural and multilingual education for their own students.

Teacher Culture, Experience, and Background

As personal perspectives and beliefs are extremely influential in all the analysis categories, we began the analysis with the category of Teacher Experiences and Background. Primarily, this category looks at the participant teacher constructions of their own ethnic/racial heritage, culture, and experiences, and the ways in which they make sense of the multiculturalism within their schools and communities.

COMMON CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TWO COURSES

(a) A minority instructor working with predominantly majority teachers who in turn will be working with minority students in public schools.

(b) Selected terms and assumptions (e.g., language, culture, race, minority groups, immigration) were thoroughly discussed in both courses.

(c) Case studies of teachers and students in multilingual and multicultural settings were analyzed on a regular bases.

(d) Participants' autobiographies--with a focus on issues of language, culture, and ethnicity--were shared and discussed at the beginning of both courses.

(e) Individual "problem" cases were shared and discussed throughout.

(f) All assignments included responding and discussing "real" cases.

(g) As women and minorities, both professors embraced the following beliefs:

- learning occurs when the content speaks to the lived experience of the learners;
- learners construct their own learning;
- students and teachers are partners in the process of teaching and learning;
- knowledge is not transmitted from teacher to student but rather negotiated, defined and redefined in a dialogical process;
- learners are more important than the content to be learned; and
- learning should help students and teachers make sense of their world and should be conducive to action.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS

While the analysis is in its preliminary stages, four important dimensions characterize the lives and teaching of culturally relevant teachers. These characteristics include:

1. The power of life experiences
2. Awareness of their own cultural identity
3. Teachers as learners
4. Commitment and responsibility for minority students

1. The Power of Life Experiences

Inadequacy of language use and cultural "fitness," can be a painful experience. Culturally relevant teachers, whose mother tongue is English, reported having had feelings of inadequacy with their first language or their second language.

For some, these painful or challenging experiences resulted from:

- international experiences (e.g., working abroad, pleasure trips, Peace Corps, student exchanges);

- working in settings where they felt as minorities (e.g., Native American reservation, community in Alaska, the barrio); or
- dealing with cross-cultural challenges in their own family (e.g., adopting a Latino child, marrying into an Italian family, having a Mexican brother-in-law).

Culturally relevant teachers--members of minority groups--reported having been, at some point in their lives, victims of language oppression or ashamed of their culture or ethnic background.

Regardless of the experiences that generated feelings of linguistic and/or cultural inadequacy, the impact of these experiences helped teachers not only to become culturally relevant teachers but, also, to develop a better understanding of the needs of and challenges affecting minority students and to adopt a critical view of the different social, political, and economic reality of their students.

2. Awareness of their own Cultural Identity

It was not uncommon to hear teachers voicing their own conflicts regarding their identity. In the case of the few Latino, African American, and Asian American teachers the quest and acceptance of their own mixed cultural and ethnic heritage, once resolved, provided the strength to struggle against inequality, exclusion and assimilation. What is more important, this acceptance and respect for their own heritage were crucial in their ability to model self-worth for children.

In the case of the European American mainstream teachers, there were fundamentally two groups: those who were surprised to find out that they too might have a particular culture and heritage, and those who had become aware of their family origins, traditions, and histories. Differences between these two groups were also reflected in the way they recognized, or did not recognize, problems dealing with race, gender, language, and culture in their classrooms and schools. Thus, awareness of their own cultural identity, or lack thereof, was instrumental in helping teachers become culturally relevant teachers.

3. Teachers as Learners

As culturally relevant teachers learned more about the cultural ways of their students, they began to question their own beliefs, assumptions, prejudices, and ways of teaching. Learning from and about their students triggered

awareness of their own assumptions and the consequences of their actions. Thus, these teachers viewed themselves as students of their students. They acknowledged that one of their roles was to learn from their students so they could, in turn, scaffold the lives and learning experiences of their students. Their main concern focused on the whole child; not only on the child as a student.

Although, to a certain extent, the same applies to all other teachers, it appears that most mainstream teachers were more concerned in how to solve individual problems with students or to learn about the appropriateness of a particular instructional strategy.

4. Commitment and Responsibility for Minority Students

One emergent characteristic of culturally relevant teachers' discourse deals with claiming and assuming responsibility for the educational experiences of their minority students. In most cases, culturally relevant teachers talked about "my" or "our" student/s, while other teachers would mostly refer to them as "those" students. Thus, although all teachers were interested in how to better address the needs of culturally and linguistic diverse students, the commitment and responsibility of such an endeavor were not embraced by all teachers. It was clear for some teachers, that something had to be done with "those" children because "it is very frustrating to have those kids in your class and not to be able to understand them. Someone has to help them."

Other teachers, whether assigned to those students or not, showed extreme concern for the welfare of their minority students and reported having challenged the system to improve the educational opportunities of "their" students.

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

While multicultural education is a noble endeavor and while it seems that all teachers can benefit from it, there are many considerations and actions that need to be accounted for to insure that multicultural education courses are effectively and equitable implemented.

In many aspects, teachers taking these courses reflect common attitudes held by the larger society. Many of them see the world in individualistic, personal, and apolitical terms. Many are confrontational and reluctant to take

risks. Because throughout their formal education, teachers have not been encouraged to examine, question, or challenge their taken-for-granted acceptance of the world view they hold, it is difficult for them to peel the layers of such socialization away without assistance and without resistance.

To a large degree courses in multicultural education have been established in many institutions to help educators understand and foster cultural pluralism, combat racism and other forms of discrimination, and learn how to negotiate within culturally diverse peoples and nations. However, a course or two is not enough. Teacher educators need to acknowledge teachers' and prospective teachers' belief systems, cultural ideologies, and experiences in order to create a context in which traditional assumptions can be challenged and alternative views explored (Ernst, 1993). To accomplish this, we must create educational environments in which the voices of a wide range of groups are heard and valued. Mainstream and minority students will then benefit from multicultural education, since both groups expand their perspectives in creating a new vision of the cultural heritage of the United States.

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Summary of Activities
Research in Multicultural Education

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Course Description

This course is intended to introduce teachers to the dynamic and multifaceted world of multicultural education. An overview is provided into how multicultural education fits into the larger fabric of North American public education. The course is divided in two sections. While the first section focuses on broad issues having to do with the social, cultural, and educational contexts, the second section focuses on language acquisition and development and culminates with a look at concerns within the classroom and beyond. This approach at understanding multicultural education will provide teachers with a starting point for addressing the needs of multicultural populations.

Required Course Texts

Scarcella, R. C. (1990). Teaching language minority students in the multicultural classroom. Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice Hall.

Bigelow, B., Miner, B., & Peterson, B. (Eds.). (1991). Rethinking Columbus. A special edition of Rethinking Schools.

Course Methodology and Activities

Projects for this course have been designed based on the following assumptions: a) classrooms are communities of teachers and learners; b) every participant brings significant knowledge and expertise in at least one area; c) by sharing what we know we can all learn a lot; d) all projects should reflect participants' particular interests, philosophy, and world views; and e) instructional activities should have a meaningful purpose.

Projects include:

Bilingual/Bicultural Autobiography which discusses your background and interests. in relation to language and culture. Reflect on the role that different languages and cultures have had in your personal or professional life.

A Case Study of your classroom that includes the most important aspects of your everyday life as a teacher. Include, in particular, activities and circumstances related to your language minority students. You can use a macro perspective, (i.e., a general picture of your program) or you can use a micro perspective (i.e., focus on one particular day, week, or incident representative of your everyday life as a teacher).

Presentation and written "lesson plans" of two activities, appropriate for LEP students or for a multicultural/multilingual class. These can be single activities, games, or lessons for one student, small group or whole group.

Final Group Project (groups of 2 or 3). Organize a program, activity, presentation, workshop, video, brochure, or whatever that will raise awareness of, and provide information about, the needs of LEP students.

Summary of Activities
MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION IN A GLOBAL SOCIETY COURSE
(Satellite Course Version)

Cynthia B. Dillard, Assistant Professor
Washington State University

Course Description

This course, Multicultural Education in a Global Society provides opportunities for students to explore, understand, and broaden their perspectives related to the multicultural and linguistically diverse schools and communities in which they will live and work as educators. It is interdisciplinary in scope, drawing from the fields of humanities, sociology, anthropology, comparative American cultures, and education. Linkages between theory and practice are emphasized which have implications for teaching and learning in a multiethnic/multicultural environment. Further, there is a focus on curriculum development and classroom decision-making skills which foster and integrate both multicultural and global perspectives into the social process of education.

Required Course Texts

Bennett, C.I. (1990). Comprehensive Multicultural Education: Theory and Practice (Second Edition). Boston: Allyn and Bacon.

Simonson, R. & Walker, S. (1988). The Graywolf Annual Five: Multicultural literacy (Opening the American mind). St. Paul: Graywolf.

Course Methodology and Activities

Since learning occurs through interactions in a social context, this satellite course will will endeavor to create contexts for ***group discussions***. ***Case-studies and issues*** will be used to provide opportunities for you to examine multiple perspectives, inquire, and develop critical perspectives related to multicultural and global education. ***Lecture and guest lecturers*** will be invited, and additional ***multicultural resources*** will be shared in class each session.

Developing literacy in multicultural and global education also has implications for the methods used in this course. ***Writing as a means for mediating understanding*** will be undertaken in ***weekly shared reflective journals, creative writing , a final written research project, and a final examination.*** In addition to ***reading the texts*** and other readings as assigned or desired, you will also respond in written form to one anothers weekly reflective journals and participate actively in class discussions.

Multicultural education also suggests the need for ***reflection and sharing of personal understandings***, especially related to background experiences, history, and one's own constructions of self as teacher. Thus, we will begin the class with the ***presentation of an autobiography*** in which you may utilize multiple creative forms of "literacy" except the overused genre of expository writing (thus, no academic "papers"). Because of the technology of the satellite, whatever you create to represent your autobiography must be able to be shared on the air. Further, each of you will be asked to call in and describe your autobiography to others in the class, as a way to personalize and to share your selves and understandings with one another (and as a way for me to get to know you as well!).